



NEWS RELEASE

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District: 5 – Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, Monterey, San Benito and Santa Cruz Counties

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CALTRANS' CENTRAL COAST PROJECTS AIM TO REDUCE WATER CONSUMPTION DURING DROUGHT

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY – Caltrans is installing “smart irrigation” controllers, a recycled-water pipeline, and low-flow fixtures to cut its water use along state highways throughout the Central Coast.

“As the drought intensifies here in California, we are making every effort to lead the way conserving the state’s precious water supplies,” said Caltrans Director Malcolm Dougherty.

Caltrans plans to install more than 30 “smart irrigation” controllers – which can reduce water usage as much as 50 to 60 percent – at various locations along U.S. Highway 101 and State Route 1 from Santa Barbara County to Santa Cruz County. The smart irrigation devices monitor plant health and apply water only when absolutely necessary. They automatically turn off when it rains and when it is forecast to rain. They also shut off and notify the water manager if the system malfunctions.

Caltrans is also installing a recycled water pipeline in San Luis Obispo County that will provide recycled water for highway landscape irrigation for Caltrans’ district office and maintenance yard in San Luis Obispo. In addition, bathroom facilities at a dozen Caltrans maintenance yards along the Central Coast are being upgraded to low-flow fixtures.

“These projects allow us to protect the use of this valuable resource during these severe drought conditions,” said Caltrans District 5 Director Tim Gubbins.

In response to the state’s severe drought, Caltrans launched a statewide educational campaign on the state’s highways, urging all Californians to conserve water. Since February, California’s more than 700 electronic highway signs have displayed the following water conservation message: “Serious Drought, Help Save Water.”

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Caltrans owns and manages more than 30,000 acres of irrigated landscape statewide. About 75 percent of the water Caltrans uses goes to irrigating highway plants, but these plants do more than make our roads look nice. They also help reduce erosion and graffiti and absorb pollutants in the air. The department has developed a [water conservation and drought action plan](#) that is eliminating excessive water use along state highways, while at the same time protecting roadside planting.

Caltrans is making dramatic changes in its irrigation activities to reduce water use while sustaining the health of roadside plants. To reach Governor Brown's water-reduction target, Caltrans is:

- No longer watering highway planting in areas of the state suffering from severe drought.
- Placing more efficient plumbing fixtures in its buildings.
- Eliminated watering lawns at rest areas and office buildings. In the limited circumstances when these lawns are being watered, it is being done using only onsite, recycled water that would otherwise be wasted or using well water that is not planned for human consumption.
- Using recycled water wherever possible.
- No longer washing state vehicles, except when necessary for safety.
- Delaying nonessential landscape projects in severely drought-affected areas until the next rainy season.
- Using dust suppressants instead of water to control dust at our construction sites.

Visit Drought.ca.gov to learn more about how California is dealing with the effects of the drought, and for more water conservation ideas, visit SaveOurH2O.org.



PHOTOS OF RECYCLED WATER PIPELINES IN SAN LUIS OBISPO



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